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TAGS: CMGT ASEC CVIS KFRD CH KCRM INL HSTC
SUBJECT: Fuzhou Alien Smuggler's advice - study in the U.S.

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REF: A. 06 Guangzhou 32403 B. Guangzhou 00063 C. 06 Guangzhou 27925

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Through an aggressive outreach program, Post actively encourages Chinese students to attend colleges and universities in the United States. However, Post continues to encounter well-organized attempts by visa brokers and snakeheads to send applicants, primarily from Fujian, to the United States using the student visa in lieu smuggling by air or sea. The Brokers provide fraudulent students with fake academic credentials, financial documents, as well as work and residency papers. Despite challenging conditions, Post's FPU and NIV units continue[t1] to work closely to identify the mala fide students while facilitating travel for bona fide students. End Summary

I MUST GO TO THIS ESL PROGRAM

¶12. (SBU) Beginning in early January 2007, NIV officers detected several F-1 student visa applicants with odd commonalities. They all intended to attend ESL programs either at Language Systems in Alhambr, CA, or FLS in Boston, MA. All of these applicants claimed to be enrolled at well known universities in Guangzhou or from high schools in the Guangzhou area. The vast majority of them were from Fuqing, a city in Fujian near the capital, Fuzhou. In total, eighteen cases with the same fraud pattern were detected in the space of two months.

DID YOU HANG UP THE PHONE?

¶13. (SBU) NIV initially attempted to verify their student status using the contact information provided on the DS-156s. However, the individuals answering the phones provided contradictory information. For example, one call to the applicant's cell phone was answered by a woman who claimed she was the maid then stated she was a cousin after learning the purpose of the call. A NIV FSN then called the father's alleged employer. The employee working at the alleged company stated the father was not available and gave a cell phone number that was supposedly the father's. However, the number was identical to the number of the alleged cousin/maid.

¶14. (SBU) In a singular and unique event, a NIV FSN and an officer

overheard an argument between two individuals perpetrating the fraud. During one call, the NIV FSN had to switch lines to answer another phone call. Once she returned to the original call, she discovered that the line was still open and two Cantonese individuals were arguing. The individuals were arguing about whether to have the alleged father not return the calls to the Consulate or say that the father was on a business trip.

¶15. (SBU) As the two continued to discuss the fraud, one opined that "anyone can use a U.S. visa to enter the United States. Even if authorities later found out that fake documents were used in a visa application, one could simply hire an attorney and stay in the United States."

¶16. (SBU) The same individuals also mentioned another applicant that was refused under 221g for further information. The individuals worried that somehow the Consulate had detected clues in his case and suspected this was also one reason why another applicant was asked to return for a second interview at the Consulate.

I Am a Guangzhou Student

¶17. (SBU) Based on the above information and the commonalities between the different applicants, FPU initiated an investigation that ultimately uncovered a large and rather sophisticated visa fraud operation.

¶18. (SBU) Based on the destination ESL schools, FPU located 13 related cases. FPU contacted each of the universities and high schools the applicants were allegedly enrolled in or had graduated from. In all cases, the universities and high schools denied the applicants had either enrolled at or graduated from their

GUANGZHOU 00000486 002 OF 002

institutions.

¶19. (SBU) A review of their DS-156s uncovered the fact that all of the students were from outside the Guangzhou area even though they claimed to live in the city. The applicants used six common addresses in Guangzhou, using each address two or three times. One address was used by six different applicants. Through searches of these addresses, an additional 5 cases were located matching the profile.

¶110. (SBU) Calls to their contact numbers were either answered by individuals who denied the applicant or applicant's parents were at the number or stated that they were a relative. However, the people answering the phone either spoke Cantonese or Cantonese accented Mandarin, not the Fuzhou dialect and accent that would be expected based on the applicant's origin.

¶111. (SBU) Despite repeated requests and attempts, none of the students returned to the Consulate for a second interview.

Ticket to America

¶112. (SBU) Based on statistics from December 2005 to February 2006, 905 students applied for visas in Guangzhou, of which only 35.5% were refused. Of the 905 students, 131 were from Fuqing and of those, the refusal rate was 70.4%.

¶113. (SBU) 2007 showed a staggering growth in the number of students. From December 2006 to February 2007, 1392 students applied for visas, a 53% growth from last year. In addition, the number of students from Fuqing grew to 217, a 66% increase from last year. The overall refusal rate climbed to 45.7%, with the refusal rate from Fuqing students climbing to 90.4%.

¶114. (SBU) The growth of Fuqing student visa applications confirms previous predictions. In 2006, a SEVIS study performed by FPU showed a 970% increase in the number of students from Fuqing (from 34 applicants in 2004 to 363 in 2005). Given that 217 people have already applied during the winter cycle period, FPU is expecting a tremendous number of applicants from Fuqing and adjoining areas

during the regular student application season starting in April and ending in August 2007.

¶15. (SBU) Organized student visa fraud as described continues to affect bona fide students negatively. Fraudulent applicants occupy interviewing slots and uses staff resources that could be directed toward outreach and assisting legitimate student visa cases. Fraudulent applicants increase Post's reported refusal rate for students, creating a negative impression about our support for bona fide students. This is compounded by the lack of cooperation by Chinese law enforcement who continues to show a lack of interest in widespread document fraud involving financial records, transcripts, property deeds, and household registries. In fact, the lack of interest appears to be encouraging more and more fraudulent applicants to apply for a student visa. End Comment.

GOLDBERG

[t1]3 uses of "continues" in this paragraph.